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MARILYN MANSON
"I OWED THE DEVIL A DEBT"



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THE

EMPEROR



One day, there was knock upon the door of Marilyn Manson's California home. Stood upon the 'Welcome' mat, though, was no ordinary visitor. Rather, it was a debt collector. And one with an old score to settle, at that.

Comparing himself to those who sold their soul to Satan to achieve greatness, the shock-rocker today intimates that, during the latter years of his career, he'd fallen behind on his musical dues to the horned one, releasing albums but failing to critically match his previous form. And so he's delivered a new collection of songs, *The Pale Emperor*, released last month, as restitution. And this time around, people aren't just saying Manson's back – they're calling it a *comeback*.

"You have to admit that to yourself, and that's sometimes a hard pill to swallow, but

it makes you more of a man, so to speak," nods Manson, in agreement. "And if we go by the Faustian metaphor that I use on the record, or the Robert Johnson blues crossroads metaphor, if I sold my soul to the Devil [then] I did have to pay him back. And I think that I was a little negligent on my bills. I heard someone knocking on my door, and the hellhounds, so to speak, and I think that this record is payment in full, with interest, thank you, you're welcome, cheque's in the mail, Devil. The Devil being myself, or my audience, or people..."

Once the Antichrist Superstar, then, 2015 finds Marilyn Manson as *The Pale Emperor*. Recorded with screen composer Tyler Bates (*Guardians Of The Galaxy*, *Watchmen*), the *God Of Fuck*'s ninth record grittily draws on the bluesy legacy of the aforementioned Johnson, as well as his own Southern background.

Not only that, but the singer has been active in other projects, such as guesting on Avril Lavigne's *Bad Girl*, appearing in *Die Antwoord's* *Ugly Boy* video and starring as white supremacist Ron Tully in *Sons Of Anarchy*.

This, then, is not just a time of restitution. It's a time of revival.

It's easy to forget that, not long ago, Manson was a man more in credit than debt. With festival-headlining shows around the globe and multimillion-selling albums to his name, he was the larger-than-life enemy of conservatives the world over. Press releases decrying his music and stage show were issued by the Christian right; Tory MPs called for his music to be banned; while the *Daily Star* described his shows as "pro-pervert" and "monstrous". Marilyn Manson was a household name, whether you were with him

Unveiled: Manson's new mime-in-a-box routine

STRIKES BACK

FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, **MARILYN MANSON** HAS BEEN MORE 'GOD OF WHAT THE FUCK?' THAN 'GOD OF FUCK'. ELEANOR GOODMAN HEARS HOW, ARMED WITH HIS BEST ALBUM IN OVER A DECADE, THE PALE EMPEROR IS USHERING IN A NEW GOLDEN AGE OF GROTESQUE...

PHOTOS: JIRO SCHNEIDER

or against him.

The perception of him as a provocateur would take a sinister turn in 1999, though, when the media baselessly blamed him for the Columbine High School massacre, in which former pupils – incorrectly reported to be Manson fans – shot 13 people dead. 'Killers Worshipped Rock Freak Manson', ran a headline in *The Sun*. It marked a period which Manson has previously stated left him feeling his career was "shoved in the dirt" – perhaps a surprising sentiment given that his albums have still sold steadily, and he remains an icon to spooky kids worldwide.

"If I was to specify that more specifically..." he begins. "What I meant was, I got to a point where I didn't enjoy doing what I did, because when Columbine happened, all doors were shut on me, and that's when you find out who your friends are. [2000's] *Holy Wood* (In

The Shadow Of The Valley Of Death) is a very emotional record for me, and when I listen to it there are still songs that make me cry when I hear 'em."

His drawl becomes more gravelly, indistinct, as he talks about going to rehab, and his friends trying to put him in an institution. His words of advice to himself were, 'Do drugs and drink when you're in a good mood, not when you're in a bad mood, and to do what you do and look good doing it, and be certain about what you're doing, and don't let anything stand in your way.'

So, after *Holy Wood*, Manson went his own way with 2003's goth-club-dancefloor-filling *The Golden Age Of Grotesque*, before 2007's *Eat Me, Drink Me* and 2009's *The High End Of Low* – albums influenced by his marriage to and divorce from burlesque model/dancer Dita Von Teese, and his subsequent

relationship with actress Evan Rachel Wood, the very public nature of which threatened to overshadow the intensity of the music itself. There was the listless *Putting Holes In Happiness*; the anguished *I Want To Kill You Like They Do In The Movies*.

"Romance tends to be the most devastating thing if you make art, and people don't think I have that spectrum of emotions," Manson begins, unprompted. "I couldn't be so angry or passionate about things if I didn't have real feelings, and sometimes people think I'm something they see on a piece of paper or the internet and not a real human being. But if you let the barometer in your life tilt towards the direction of the other people that you're with, in any situation, but mostly in romance, you stop being yourself, and then you're not the person that the other person wants, so it's never good to do that. It really makes

Well, it's certainly an improvement on that Mechanical Animals look...

**"IT WASN'T
UNTIL THIS
PAST YEAR THAT
I FOUND WHO I
WANTED TO BE"**

MARILYN MANSON

PORTRAIT OF AN ANTICHRIST SUPERSTAR!

THE COLOURFUL LIFE OF MARILYN MANSON,
IN ONE HANDY TIMELINE

1994

Interscope refuse to let Manson use a naked photo of himself as a child as art for debut album *Portrait Of An American Family*.

1995

The God Of Fuck is ordained by Church Of Satan founder Anton LaVey.



1996

1997

Manson makes his acting debut... playing a porn star, in David Lynch's *Lost Highway*.

1998

1999

Manson is caught in a media storm, following incorrect reports that the Columbine massacre gunmen loved his music.

2000

2001

2002

The Golden Age Of Grotesque, Manson's first art exhibition, is held in Los Angeles.

2003

2004

American retailer Target bans Mechanical Animals due to the cover artwork showing Manson as Omega, a genderless alien with breasts.



Proving he isn't really a genderless alien, Manson is fined for rubbing his genitalia against a security guard's head.



MARILYN MANSON

everything fall apart."

He parrots a phrase he's used many times before – "And I have tended to gravitate towards broken birds or been flypaper for damaged women, because I thought I could fix them" – before tellingly adding that "what I needed to fix was myself, but I tried to project that onto other people. That was my error."

Born Villain, released in 2012, was positioned as a comeback album. Yet despite newly driven songs like the sleazy Lay Down Your Goddamn Arms and the throbbing Hey, Cruel World..., it never received a unanimous thumbs-up from fans and critics alike.

"There was a sense of being *lost*, I believe, over the past few years," muses Manson, thinking back. "As much as I wanted to admit to myself I'd found who I wanted to be, I don't think it was until this past year that I found who I wanted to be. Now I have that new knowledge, which is sort of like when you lost your virginity. You're not really sure what to do with your dick, or your music, if you wanna compare the two. I don't know. You have a whole different world in front of you."

Despite Manson's perennially dark image, this "whole different world" is bright and fulfilling. While making Born Villain, he felt introverted and stayed inside his "strange, damp studio flat". With The Pale Emperor, he began work the day after moving into a new house, and regularly went out.

"I think eventually that record was... I'm not going to disregard everything I've done in the past, but I'm just going to say that I had a *grand desire*. I would wake up, go running, and not just from the police," he quips, "but as a healthy exercise – because I had to balance out." His voice takes on a typically dry tone, as he continues: "If you want to be indestructible and drink and do drugs, you really have to tend to be tough enough to get into a fight that you're not going to lose. So I started fight training. I don't know why, I mean I know I like to get into fights... but everything happened."

Ask the vocalist what satisfies him in 2015, and the answer isn't absinthe, accolades, or debauchery like the Roman emperor referenced in his album title – it's this sense of routine that has allowed the pieces of his life to fall into place.

"It's my conditioning, you know?" he responds. "Being on tour from the day that I left my home for the first time, I had a piece of paper every day that said, 'Here's when you get up, here's when you do soundcheck, here's when you do a show...' It's not comparable to my father in Vietnam, but we were discussing the difficulty from when you're in such a surreal reality to come back to what could be considered a regular reality."

Rather than stifling Manson's creativity,

though, this structure appears to have enhanced it. He and Tyler Bates, who he met while working on Californication in 2013, would sit opposite each other to compose. The languid Birds Of Hell Awaiting came first, with the riff from The Beautiful People given a sinister, Southern makeover. Manson drew on time living in his native Ohio, Florida and New Orleans ("N'awlins"), as well as Louisiana-based cop show True Detective, while Tyler's presence ensured their sounds were cinematic in scope – most notably on Cupid Carries A Gun, the theme tune for TV drama Salem. Finally, rather than following the insular motto of his difficult past, Manson had artistically opened himself up to others.

"I think I became comfortable with collaborating, and not trying to be in control of everything," he considers. "I tried to be in control of everything all the time for years in a way that was not productive for me emotionally, and artistically I made things I was so proud of, but I wasn't very satisfied or happy at the end of it, and that's the whole point of it. Music is almost a spell or a conjuring, in the same way that sex is, and you're supposed to be happy when it's over, not unsatisfied or... If the world was a girl and this record was me fucking the world, I came to satisfy. No pun intended."

As for those romantic relationships he used to struggle with? He's guarded but content. "I feel very calm and anticipating, er, some sort of greater outcome for this new year..." he says, cryptically (though he's hinted in recent interviews that fatherhood could be on the cards).

Yet while 2014 saw Manson lay the groundwork for this year's accomplishments, it could have easily been an annus horribilis, as his mother passed away. Rather than incapacitating him, it proved to be a catalyst for change.

"It was a good year for me to sort of realise what's important in life," he recalls. "It was a shitty year in that everyone probably expected me to fall to pieces, but I really needed to be strong for my dad, and I wanted to make him proud, so I got on his favourite show, Sons Of Anarchy – my favourite show. And there are so many things that I set my eyes on and accomplished."

The singer frequently mentions SOA, and



THE EMPEROR'S NEW TUNES

MANSON EXPLAINS HIS THREE FAVOURITE PALE EMPEROR TRACKS

THIRD DAY OF A SEVEN DAY BINGE

"Third Day... could be taken in a literal sense or a Biblical sense. I think the only part of it that was based upon any experience that happened to me the day that I wrote it was probably the chorus. I think the song was also, in my head, playing off my upbringing with God and seven and the third day, and all of those things."

THE MEPHISTOPHELES OF LOS ANGELES

"The record has so much of the Faustian story in it, about me selling my soul to be a rockstar, and paying it back with this record. It also poses the question, 'Is Los Angeles Mephistopheles?' [the servant figure in German legend Faust]. Do you sell your soul when you move to Hollywood?"

ODDS OF EVEN

"There's a predominance of wild coyotes that run in packs in the Hollywood Hills, and [one day] I heard they were howling. I recorded it with my iPhone out of the window, and walked back in the [studio] and said, 'I have an idea for what I want to end the record with...'"

his affection for the cast is unmistakable. He even slips into Tommy Flanagan's (aka Chibs') Scottish accent, mimicking the elongated way he says "iiiiiiiPhone". It's another symptom of the shifts he's recently experienced in life.

"I've never really been comfortable making friends. I made a lot of new friends, and I never really had that growing up – the camaraderie," he admits. "Some of that came from working with the guys on Sons Of Anarchy, and some of it came from seeing Billy Corgan again after 15 years, and I actually forgot that he was the one who taught me how to play guitar – so, if you don't like my playing, then don't blame me (laughs)."

While Manson's unfailingly polite and charming, there's a sense that he'd rather be out there *creating* stuff, or hanging out with these new-found buds. Perhaps it's because he realises that life's short. Of the value of time. The importance of fun.

"I don't wanna die, but I'm not afraid of death," he emphasises. "And I live every day to the fullest as if there's no tomorrow. I always have. Sometimes I think I wasn't enjoying myself, but now I think you could make a simple comparison to something modern, like Twitter. If you have only so many letters to put into a sentence, don't spend half of them being angry. Or if you want to make it into a very specific situation, don't spend half of your day not being happy. Spend it doing something that makes you happy – even if being pissed off makes you happy. Just do whatever you gotta do that day, so when you go to bed, there's no black cloud over your head. And that rhymed (laughs)."

The God Of Fuck? Right now, Marilyn Manson is more like The God Of Not Giving A Fuck – or, to 'specify more specifically', The God Of Focusing On The Things He Gives A Fuck About. And it's fucking good to have him back.

THE PALE EMPEROR IS OUT NOW THROUGH COOKING VINYL. MARILYN MANSON PLAYS DOWNLOAD THIS JUNE – SEE THE GIG GUIDE FOR INFORMATION

The golden age of burlesque begins, as Manson marries dancer Dita Von Teese. They divorce a year later.



Manson's leather trousers land him in trouble with animal rights group PETA, who name him one of the worst-dressed celebs.

During the swine flu pandemic, Manson claims he has the illness, but concert promoters save their bacon by denying it.



Manson has a brawl in Switzerland. His ear loses, and he needs 24 stitches to prevent him "from becoming Van Gogh".

Manson ends up in the slammer. But only on TV, as he plays white supremacist Ron Tulley in Sons Of Anarchy.

2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014

Former keyboard player Madonna Wayne Gacy accuses Manson of spending the band's money on Nazi memorabilia and the skeleton of a Chinese girl. They settle out of court.



Trent Reznor, who originally signed Manson, says substance abuse made him into a "dopey clown".



Manson stuffs himself with cake and ice cream (probably) when he plays Johnny Depp's son's 10th birthday party.

Two shows in Russia are cancelled due to a bomb threat and religious protests.